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Reviews

SPANISH IN THE HIGH SCHOOLS: A Handbook of Methods.

By LAURENCE A. WILKINS, Sanborn & Co.

The material in this book may properly be classified under two heads: propaganda and methodology. What Mr. Wilkins has to say under the latter head is in general clear, sound, and interesting. He may be at times somewhat diffuse, he may go too far in assuming absolute ignorance on the part of his readers, but we realize that these chapters are the work of a skilful, experienced, and enthusiastic teacher. In the propagandist part of his book he seems to feel that he is called upon to defend and justify that which is generally accepted and hence needs no justification. The volume closes with a good bibliography.

In the first chapter the author calls attention to the great demand for Spanish in our schools and to the desirability of including it in the curriculum of the Junior High School. He deploras the lack of "Courses in material for and methods of, teaching Spanish" in the colleges and universities of this and other countries. In a footnote on page 5 he mentions courses given by Professor Wagner at the University of Michigan, Professor Hendrix at the University of Texas, and Mr. Luria at Hunter Evening College, New York City. To these might be added the courses given for several years by Professors Geddes, Waxman, and others at Boston University, by Professor Warshaw at Missouri, by Professor Parmenter at Chicago, and by Miss Marie A. Solano at the Boston Normal School. A little research would undoubtedly make possible the addition of other instances. It would appear that educational authorities are quite alive to the situation, especially when we consider that the vast enthusiasm for the study of Spanish has arisen only in the last five or six years. It may also be borne in mind that the great principles of modern language teaching have already been well established; that practically every phase of the subject has already been discussed for French and German; that a very large part of those now teaching Spanish have taught and have been trained in teaching French and German; that these two facts have hitherto prevented the lack of special handbooks on the methods of teaching Spanish from being keenly felt; and, finally, that it is just this mass of material on the teaching of language which has made possible the production at

this time of the volume under discussion, which, desirable, opportune, and welcome as it is, is simply the application to Spanish of established opinion on teaching modern languages.

Chapter II gives the reasons why Spanish should be studied. They are listed as the commercial, the cultural and the politico-social or international. Mr. Wilkins devotes some eight pages (7-17) to explaining the first point—which has never been contradicted. He gives a fairly long array of facts and figures, most of which are well known and easily accessible, but it is at least reasonable to ask whether his interpretation of them and his conclusions are always impartial.

In recent years we have heard a great deal from Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade, from government officials and from politicians in regard to the need of preparing our young men to take advantage of the opportunities offered by our increasing trade with South America. It is due in part to this advertising that Spanish classes have increased out of all proportion to the number of competent teachers available. Every year a few high school graduates secure positions as a result of their knowledge of Spanish. Speaking solely from my own experience, Spanish is oftener an asset to the graduate of a commercial high school than is French or German. At the same time, the alluring prospects of innumerable openings in the world of trade, which have been held out to students in Spanish, have not been realized.

Despite our growing trade with South America the enthusiast for Spanish seems at times to forget that the great bulk of our foreign trade is and will long continue to be with Europe; and that in gaining and holding the trade with South America a knowledge of Spanish is only one of many requisities—not the open sesame to fortune.

When as a result of economic conditions our American manufacturers grow willing to treat with South Americans as equals, knowing what they want, and when American boys are willing to go to South America and settle down and become bona fide residents, then a knowledge of Spanish or Portuguese will benefit large numbers of our young men in a commercial way. At present it is open to question whether more of them ought not to be mastering French and German, in order to enable them to meet the bitter commercial rivalry which is bound soon to come.

On pages 12 ff., Mr. Wilkins speaks of the vast enthusiasm of business people to learn Spanish and of the various "get rich quick" schemes of the so-called professors of Spanish. He speaks also of the large registration in Spanish in the evening high schools and the commercial high schools of New York City. While I am willing to admit that this is in some sense due to an intelligent demand, my own observation shows that other factors enter into the question. Once start the propaganda and for a time every-

thing goes of itself. It is simply a question of getting the gang started. French and German and Italian have had their day in the "get rich quick" schemes and perhaps the victims have been as numerous. Perhaps in the case of French and Italian the propaganda has not had the punch that Spanish has developed. Evening schools and other schools will follow a fad in the same way; sometimes it is bookkeeping, sometimes French, sometimes Spanish. At present Spanish is having its innings. The number of those who actually need Spanish in business cannot be gauged by the number studying it in evening schools.

On page 15, Mr. Wilkins takes up the cultural value of Spanish. Under this heading he states first that the study of Spanish effects the same linguistic training as the study of French. Later on he says that the study of Spanish will develop as many brain loops as will the study of Russian or Sanskrit. Then he adds the significant statement that "It all depends upon the teaching and the effort put forth by the student." As for the effort put forth by the student, some of us would be inclined to say that to acquire even a modicum of Russian or Sanskrit requires a far greater effort than to attain the same or a much greater knowledge of Spanish, but, as Mr. Wilkins says, the teaching is the important element in the case.

Those of us who were trained in Latin and Greek twenty-five years ago have viewed with considerable concern the passing of the ancient languages from the high school curriculum. Whatever their cultural value, Latin and Greek were in general well taught. They gave place to French and German and the teaching of these latter was at first execrable, but, as the transition was a slow one, the teaching steadily improved and in the last few years has become at least creditable. Now comes the wild rush for Spanish. The curriculum must be changed over night. Ten classes in Spanish have grown where there were two before. It is recommended—and by no less an authority on education than Mr. McAdoo—that the teaching of Spanish be made compulsory in all High Schools. We must have Spanish at all costs. There are no teachers, few courses in "materials and methods," few good text-books; still we must have Spanish. But the success of the study of Spanish in "developing brain loops" depends upon the teaching. If Latin, or French—or even German!—well taught, will produce brain loops, then let us give them a chance and call a halt on the zeal for Spanish, which is forcing a number of conscientious, experienced teachers to throw aside the work for which they are well-fitted, to allow themselves to be victimized by some "get rich quick" scheme of teaching Spanish while you wait, and then do grossly inadequate work in the classroom.

Page 16. "In the Spanish language is expressed one of the greatest literatures of the world." Is it necessary for Mr. Wilkins

to devote three or four pages to proving this thesis? And since his subject is Spanish in the High Schools, is there any particular reason for mentioning the influence exerted by the literature of Spain upon Thomas Middleton, Cyril Tourneur and Nathaniel Field? Isn't his whole discussion of Spanish literature unnecessary for those for whom he is writing, who may—even if deficient in their command of Spanish—be assumed to be people of moderate intelligence and some degree of education?

We come next to Mr. Wilkins' third point that a knowledge of Spanish is the key to understanding a great race, and that a knowledge of Spanish is a powerful politico-social force making for a spiritual ideal of Pan-Americanism and international amity in the New World. If compulsory Spanish will accomplish these aims by all means let us have it. If Spanish as she is taught and as she apparently must continue to be taught, will turn the trick, then let the yearning for Spanish be satisfied. Did the high authorities whom Mr. Wilkins quotes in this chapter acquire by this means their understanding and appreciation of the ideal of Pan-American unity? Is not a large part of this problem to be handled in other ways and by other means, valuable as the training in Spanish may be?

It is doubtful if the author can substantiate the statement (p. 35) that ten million people who claim the protection of the Stars and Stripes speak Spanish as their mother tongue. This figure could be attained only by including the Philippine islands, and it is well known that Spanish is not the mother tongue of most Filipinos.

Chapter III takes up the present progress of Spanish. Certainly the Spanish enthusiasts may take comfort from the facts presented. Already a large number of colleges are recognizing Spanish as on a par with French and German, while schools all over the country, both public and private, are providing instruction in Spanish as fast as it is demanded. In this chapter the author takes up the matter of language instruction in the grammar grades. His experience is evidently that of the rest of us. The work has in general not been well done. He looks upon the Junior High School to solve the difficulty. Perhaps it will. If the school life of the American pupil can be split into three parts instead of two as at present, thus making necessary two periods of transition and adjustment instead of one, much will undoubtedly be accomplished. Despite the many apparent advantages of the scheme, the whole thing is still in the experimental stage. Mr. Wilkins states the ideal, and recognizes the present drawbacks and difficulties. His statement of the case on pages 45 and 46 is admirable.

Chapter IV takes up the preparation of the secondary school teacher of Spanish. After three of four pages to which no one can take exception, he starts on his ideal of academic training.

We admire his enthusiasm, and question to some extent the value of the training that he has suggested. Happy the future teacher of Spanish who at the age of fifteen, a high school sophomore, has, like Squire O'Grady, "chalked out his course." The three years of Spanish and the three years of Latin are quite within reach. Perhaps here and there a favored high school can give a minimum of three hours a week to the study of the history and geography of Hispanic lands. Such a course is greatly to be desired, almost as much so as a similar course in the history and geography of the United States.

The college work laid out by Mr. Wilkins seems very well planned. We note even that the prospective teacher may learn German—not of course for its own sake—because, after all, the Germans have done something worth while in the study of Spanish literature and linguistics. Also he is to study education, with special attention to the problems of secondary schools. All this is perfectly sound and perfectly feasible. But what follows seems a bit visionary. Unfortunately candidates for the position of teacher of Spanish in an American secondary school do not as a rule come from the wealthy leisure class. But leaving this question aside, what would be the advantage to the secondary school teacher of courses in Pedagogy and Arabic at a Spanish University? How can he find time, in the two or three years allowed by Mr. Wilkins, to acquire any thorough knowledge of Romance philology, the history of philosophy, and the history of the Jews in Spain? If he wants to study all these things, he can learn more about them in a shorter time at an American University. They are things to be acquired largely by private reading and study. However valuable erudition of this sort is to the University professor, or to the scholarly gentleman of leisure; however desirable it ought theoretically to be to a secondary school teacher, experience shows the best secondary school teacher is generally the one who has the least of it. The year or two abroad should be spent in getting a sympathetic understanding at first hand of Spanish character, institutions, customs, life, rather than in thumbing the books in Spanish libraries. By all means let the teacher take a few courses at the University of Madrid, but in order to hear and know some of the leaders in Spanish educational life. Let him attend the University in order to make the acquaintance of Spaniards, not in order to prepare for taking a Ph.D. on his return to America. Since, as Mr. Wilkins points out, the impulse toward the teaching of Spanish in this country is largely commercial, some attention should be devoted during the long period of preparation in Spain and South America to the study of economic facts and conditions. But amid the agencies of instruction and "means of grace" indicated in this chapter, Mr. Wilkins does not suggest the coöperation to be obtained from Boards of Trade or Chambers of Commerce in Spanish cities.

After a short and pertinent discussion of the sabbatical year, Mr. Wilkins concludes this chapter with the statement that various things, among them "the metathesis of consonants and liquids" and "Comenius' theories of modern language instruction" may not be fit matters of instruction in the Junior High School class in Spanish, but that a knowledge of them and similar things should make teaching more helpful and inspiring. In some cases it may.

Chapter V states clearly and well the aim in teaching Spanish; Chapter VI outlines the modified direct or "eclectic" method which is in favor with the majority of modern language teachers in this country; Chapter VII suggests a course of study for the Junior High School and outlines the methods of teaching it. These chapters are well done, clear and practical, based on the observation of an experienced teacher. In Chapter VIII the author presents us the "syllabus of minima in Spanish" covering the four years course in the New York City High Schools. This excellent syllabus is well known and calls for no discussion here. The writer then considers the connection between this course and that of the Junior High School, showing clearly the awkwardness of the present adjustment and the superior training which may reasonably be expected in the ideal Junior High School of the future. In the High School course he wisely advises that commercial Spanish be delayed until the beginning of the third year.

In these chapters and those which follow, Mr. Wilkins is at his best. Chapter IX, on the organization of classes is excellent. Chapter X on the recitation is equally good. Chapter XI on methods and devices keeps up the same standard, with the possible exception of the section on "Memory Work" where the dragging in of the elementary psychological terminology seems unnecessary. Chapter XII, entitled, "A Miscellany of Suggestions" will prove helpful to many young teachers. Some indication as to the stage of progress at which the devices suggested might best be employed would have made the chapter still more helpful. "Secretary's Reports," "Diaries kept in Spanish," etc., are generally encouraged too early in the course and may easily be productive of more harm than good.

Chapter XIII, "Club Work in the Department of Spanish," suggests several useful and interesting lines of activity. The theory is all right. In practice there is often great difficulty in finding time for putting the theory into effect and in keeping up the interest of the pupils. The same thing is true in the matter of correspondence with pupils in foreign countries. It is an interesting stunt until the novelty wears off. The gain from it is in most cases hardly worth while.

In Chapters XIV and XV Mr. Wilkins has reprinted two articles previously issued: "On the Modern Language Teacher of Superior Merit" and on "Handicaps to the Teaching of Spanish

in the United States." As the principal points have been either suggested or discussed elsewhere, such repetition is useless.

Chapter XVI, "Spanish as a Foundation for the Study of Latin," while hardly in place in the book, may serve to call anew the attention of teachers to an interesting academic question. The whole question of teaching a modern language before Latin is begun has been so fully discussed that we need say no more than that Mr. Wilkins has very ably stated the case for Spanish. The vast majority of those now studying Spanish will never take Latin, so that the question is neither important nor serious. When we shall have succeeded in raising the teaching of Spanish to a reasonably high plane, it will be time to set about the banishment of Latin from the High School and providing every High School pupil with the privilege of "compulsory" Spanish.

Even in this long review, the book has hardly received justice. Faults in construction it certainly has. A great mass of material is presented, often badly digested or out of place. There is too much repetition. The use of black-type to arrest the attention disfigures the page and to many readers is repellent. On the other hand the book is readable, interesting, full of good suggestions, stimulating and helpful. In fine, though the treatise be faulty in technique and show evidence of hasty compilation, it may be heartily recommended to teachers of Spanish.

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Le Chevalier de Blanchefleur et autres pièces. Six Petites Comédies
par ELEANOR W. HUTCHINSON. D. C. Heath & Co., 1919.
iv+131 pp. \$.48.

The simplicity and charm of the six little French plays published under the title of the first one, "Le Chevalier de Blanchefleur," makes them available not only for dramatic production but also for class reading for young pupils. They are conceived in the same spirit that animated Lorley Ada Ashleman when she wrote the historical plays published in her *French Dramatic Reader* (Flanagan, 1907), and they are written with the same comprehension of what can be produced by young actors in a foreign language that characterizes Josette Spink's *French Plays for Children* (Heath, 1916). In each play one important historical fact or event appears in the midst of an interesting but simple intrigue. The weakness of Chilperic and the strength of Pépin are revealed in connection with the marriage of Blanchefleur and Rodolphe de Vincy. "Le Verre de Saint Denis" shows the encouragement given by the Abbé Suger to the art of glass making. The impartial justice exercised by Louis IX is seen in "Les Deux Voleurs de